



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THREE COLUMBIA, TENNESSEE MEN FACE FEDERAL CHARGES
FOR ISLAMIC CENTER BURNING**

Nashville, TN - February 12, 2008 - Edward M. Yarbrough, United States Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee, Grace Chung Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, James M. Cavanaugh, Special Agent in Charge of the Nashville Division of the ATF, My Harrison, Special Agent in Charge of the Memphis Division of the FBI, and Barry Crotzner, Chief of the Columbia, Tennessee Police Department, announced today the filing of a federal felony criminal complaint against three men for their roles in burning down and vandalizing the Islamic Center of Columbia in Columbia, Tennessee.

The complaint charges the three men, Eric Ian Baker, Michael Corey Golden, and Jonathan Edward Stone, all of Columbia, with unlawful possession of a destructive device in violation of 26 U.S.C. § 5681(d) and 18 U.S.C. § 2.

According to the complaint, Baker, Golden, and Stone had planned for approximately one week to burn down the Islamic Center. On February 9, 2008, the defendants used gasoline, rags, and

empty beer bottles to fashion Molotov Cocktails. They went to the Islamic Center, where Baker spray-painted three swastikas onto the walls of the building, along with the phrases “We run the world” and “White Power.” Golden and Stone then broke into the building, ignited the Molotov Cocktails, and used them to ignite the Islamic Center.

“Three individuals who are accused of fire bombing a place of worship face federal charges today. Today begins a court process to hold the individuals accountable for an act which destroyed religious property and shocked a community,” stated Cavanaugh. “We are fortunate despite the loss of property and a sense of sadness, that no one was killed or injured from the incident.”

“The Department of Justice takes hate crimes very seriously, and the United States Attorney’s Office will prosecute such crimes vigorously and to the fullest extent of the law,” stated United States Attorney Edward M. Yarbrough.

If convicted, each defendant, Baker, Golden, and Stone, face a maximum sentence of ten years and a fine of up to \$250,000.

This case remains under investigation by the ATF, the FBI, and the Columbia Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Hal McDonough of the United States Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Tennessee and Trial Attorney Jonathan Skrmetti of the Criminal Section of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division.

A federal felony criminal complaint is merely an accusation and the defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.